

# NFF Grants Improve Wildlife Habitat

By Hannah Ettema



## Clearing the Way for a Threatened Frog Species

**L**ike other reptiles, you'll likely hear the Chiricahua leopard frog (CLF) before you see it. This threatened species has a distinctive call, a one-to-two-second snore that distinguishes it from other leopard frogs.

Unfortunately, the CLF is losing habitat across its native range of southern Arizona and New Mexico due to non-native fish, bullfrogs and crayfish. The spread of a chytridomycete skin fungi to CLF habitat has also impacted the population, making additional habitat that much more important.

With support from the NFF's Matching Awards Program, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition (AWC) restored habitat for the CLF on the Coronado National Forest. Wanting to break out from their standard projects of trail work and monitoring, AWC was excited to

take on a wildlife habitat project.

"We wanted to engage our volunteers in a different type of project," said Brian Stultz, AWC Stewardship Coordinator. "Volunteers enjoyed working on something to support this threatened species."

Over two weekend workdays, AWC hosted volunteers and students from Prescott College to restore habitat at the Hermitage wetland in the Chiricahua Mountains. At this site, a natural spring used to provide necessary water for the CLF, but the channel that flowed from the spring to a pond

where the frogs lived had become blocked by native grasses.

Volunteers and staff first dug out the old stream channel, removing grasses and dirt that prevented the water from reaching the wetland. During another weekend, 11 students from Prescott College placed river rocks along the stream channel to prevent the grasses from clogging the waterway again.

Now, Hermitage wetland offers a large, wide pool that not only provides habitat for the CLF, but also various amphibians and even some bat species. 🌿

Left: Volunteers dig out the new stream channel. Right: The crew showing off the new pond and wetlands complex.

